

Remarks at Nellis Air Force Base, Nevada

May 27, 2009

Thank you so much. Everybody please have a seat. Thank you so much. I've got some special acknowledgments that I have to make. First of all, we've got some members of the congressional delegation Nevada who are doing outstanding jobs not only for Nevada but also for the men and women in uniform. And so please give a warm welcome to Congresswoman Shelley Berkley, Congresswoman Dina Titus. And we're in his district, he couldn't be here, but Congressman Dean Heller, please give him a big round of applause.

I also want to thank the State controller, Kim Wallin, for her great work; the Nevada secretary of State, Ross Miller; Nevada State treasurer, Kate Marshall. I want to thank the Brigadier General, Stanley Kresge, for the wonderful, outstanding work that he does, as well as Colonel Dave Belote, who just gave me an outstanding tour of the solar panel facility out here. But mainly I want to thank all of you, the men and women in uniform, for your service to our country. We're grateful to you. Thank you.

I just spoke to a handful of your commanders here. I know some are about to be deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan, many have just come back. The fact that you serve each and every day to keep us safe is something that every American is grateful for. And so if I don't do anything else as your Commander in Chief, I'm going to make sure that we're there for you just as you've been there for us. So thank you very much.

Finally, let me acknowledge Senator Harry Reid, not just for the generous introduction, not only because he's been a great friend, not only because he's been an outstanding Majority Leader, but also because of everything that he's done for the people of Nevada and for the armed services. He is somebody who has never forgotten his roots. After all these years, he still brings the voices and values of Searchlight, Nevada to the Nation's most important debates in Washington, DC, and we are better off because he does. So please give Harry Reid a big round of applause.

You know, it's always a pleasure to get out of Washington a little bit. Washington is okay, but it's nice taking some time to talk to Americans of every walk of life outside of the Nation's Capital. And there's nothing like a quick trip to Vegas in the middle of the week. Like millions of other Americans, we come to this beautiful city for the sights and for the sounds. And today we come for the sun, because right now, we're standing near the largest solar electric plant of its kind in the entire Western Hemisphere—the entire Western Hemisphere. More than 72,000 solar panels built on part of an old landfill provide 25 percent of the electricity for the 12,000 people who live and work here at Nellis, that's the equivalent of powering about 13,200 homes during the day.

It's a project that took about half a year to complete, created 200 jobs, and will save the United States Air Force, which is the largest consumer of energy in the Federal Government, nearly \$1 million a year. It will also reduce harmful carbon pollution by 24,000 tons per year, which is the equivalent of removing 4,000 cars from our roads. And most importantly, this base serves as a shining example of what's possible when we harness the power of clean, renewable energy to build a new, firmer foundation for economic growth.

Now, that's the kind of foundation we're trying to build all across America. One hundred days ago, in the midst of the worst economic crisis in half a century, we passed the most sweeping economic recovery act in history, a plan designed to save jobs, create new ones, and put money in people's pockets. It's a plan designed not only to revive the economy in the short term, but to rebuild the economy over the long term. It's a plan that we passed thanks to the tireless efforts of Harry Reid and Congresswoman Berkley and Congresswoman Titus and all the other outstanding public servants in Washington.

But if it hadn't been for Harry Reid—because the Senate is tough—moving this Recovery Act through Congress with the skill and tenacity and urgency of somebody who knows the struggles that millions of people are going through, we would have not gotten it done. So I am eternally grateful to him and the other members of the congressional delegation for helping to pass this plan.

And 100 days later, we're already seeing results. And today we're releasing a report that details the progress that we've made in every region of the country. In these last few months, the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act has saved or created nearly 150,000 jobs, jobs building solar panels and wind turbines, making homes and buildings more energy efficient. They're the jobs of teachers and police officers and nurses who have not been laid off as a consequence of this Recovery Act. They're the jobs fixing roads and bridges, jobs at start-ups and small businesses, and jobs that will put thousands of young Americans to work this summer.

Also in the Recovery Act, by the way, is all sorts of construction taking place on bases just like Nellis to support military families, and I know that that is something that Michelle Obama has taken a lot of time looking into; that's something that I'm spending a lot of time thinking about. We want to make sure that our bases and our facilities are the best in the world for our best troops.

Ninety-five percent of all working families saw their take-home pay increase because of the tax cut that we provided in the Recovery Act. Fifty-four million seniors received \$250 extra in their Social Security checks. Laid-off workers have received greater unemployment benefits and paid less for their health care. For the thousands of families whose homes have been made more energy efficient, it's also saved them about \$350 on their energy bills. Other Americans saved thousands by taking advantage of the tax credits the Recovery Act has provided for the purchase of a new home, or a new fuel-efficient car, or energy-efficient cooling and heating systems, windows, and insulation. And all of this has helped to fuel demand that is helping businesses put more Americans back to work.

But this is just the beginning. There are still too many Americans out of work and too many who still worry that their job may be next. There are still too many families struggling to pay the bills, and too many businesses struggling to keep their doors open. And that's why we will continue to implement the Recovery Act as quickly and effectively as possible over the next 2 years. We're just at the start of this Recovery Act. We are going to keep on going through this year and into next year, because we are going to make sure that not only are we putting people back to work, but we're laying the foundation for a better economy. And that's why my administration will continue an unrelenting, day-by-day effort to fight for economic recovery on all fronts.

Now, I just want to emphasize, even as we clear away some of the wreckage and debris of this extraordinary recession, I've also said that our next task is making sure that this doesn't happen again. We can't return to the same bubble-and-bust, borrow-and-spend economy based

on maxed-out credit cards and overleveraged banks and financial profits that were only real on paper—see, that young lady agrees with me. *[Laughter]* We have to lay a new foundation for prosperity, a foundation constructed on the pillars that will grow our economy and help America compete in the 21st century.

And a renewable energy revolution is one of those pillars. We know the cost of our oil addiction all too well. It's the cost measured by the billions of dollars we send to nations with unstable or unfriendly regimes. We help to fund both sides of the war on terror because of our addiction to oil. It's the cost of our vulnerability to the volatility of the oil markets. It's the cost we feel in shifting weather patterns that are already causing unprecedented droughts and more intense storms. It's a cost we can't bear any longer.

Today, projects like the one at Nellis are still the exception to the rule, unfortunately. America produces less than 3 percent of our electricity through renewable sources of energy like wind and solar—less than 3 percent. In contrast, Denmark produces 20 percent of their electricity through wind. We pioneered solar technology, but we've fallen behind countries like Germany and Japan in generating it, even though they get less sun than we do. They certainly get less sun than Nevada. *[Laughter]*

So we've got a choice: We can remain the world's leading importer of oil, sending our money and our wealth away, or we can become the world's leading exporter of clean energy. We can hand over the jobs of the future to our competitors, or we can confront what they've already recognized as the great opportunity of our time: The nation that leads the world in creating new sources of clean energy will be the nation that leads the 21st century global economy. And that's the nation I want America to be, and I know that's the nation you want America to be.

Already, we've made more progress on this front in the last 4 months than we have in the last three decades. Last week, I brought auto executives, labor unions, environmental groups, Democrats, and Republicans together to set the toughest ever national fuel-efficiency standard for our cars and trucks, a standard that will save 1.8 billion barrels of oil over the lifetime of the vehicles sold in the next 5 years.

In Congress, leaders like Harry Reid are also working to pass a historic energy plan that will help end our dependence on foreign oil while preventing the worst consequences of climate change. It's a system—it's a plan that will create a system of clean energy incentives that will create good, American jobs and crack down on polluters who pollute the air we breathe and the water we drink.

Finally, by the end of the next 2 years, the Recovery Act will have enabled the—a doubling of our Nation's capacity to generate renewable energy by investing in projects just like the one on this Air Force base. And today I'm announcing the availability of funding for two Recovery Act programs that will help us reach that goal.

The first is a solar energy technologies program that will help replicate the success of the Nellis project in cities and States across America, because in this case, what happens in Vegas should not stay in Vegas. *[Laughter]* We want everybody to know what we're doing here in Vegas. We'll invest in the development and deployment of solar technology wherever it can thrive, and we'll find the best ways to integrate solar power into our electric grid.

The second program I'm announcing will help develop the use of geothermal energy in America. As many of you in Nevada know, geothermal energy is literally defined as "heat from the Earth." This heat can then be harnessed as a clean, affordable, and reliable source of

energy. And already, Nevada has 17 industrial scale geothermal plants, and your capacity to generate this type of power is expected to increase in the next few years. The program we're announcing will help accelerate this process here and across America. So this is something that we expect will—[applause]—this will create more jobs, it will create more businesses, and more affordable electricity for the American people.

Now, from where we stand today, the road to economic recovery is still long. We've got a lot of work to do. There are a lot of folks who are still hurting out there. And the road to a new, clean energy economy is even longer. We're not going to do it overnight. But after 4 months of this administration and 100 days of this Recovery Act, we have carved out a path toward progress. It's a path that begins in places just like this Air Force base, where ordinary citizens tap into their sense of innovation and ingenuity to reinvent the world around them.

This base has been known as the "Home of the Fighter Pilot." Now it's the home of the largest solar energy installation of its kind in the Western Hemisphere. And by the way, the two concepts are connected because it is good for our national security if we've got more control over our own energy use. And that's the story that will be told all across America, in cities and towns, where a shuttered factory reopens to build wind turbines; where a hospital treats patients with new technology and pulls up their history with new electronic records; where a young entrepreneur with a nest egg and a good idea starts a business and creates more jobs.

That's how we move America forward. This is how we've always moved forward. It happens slowly, in fits and starts, but it always happens surely when we are dedicated to bringing about change. It happens not by chance or by luck, but because the American people keep pushing ahead, persevering through hardship, growing through challenge, building something firmer and stronger in place of what was. That's the work we've begun in these last few months, and with your help, this is the work we will continue to do in the days and months ahead.

For all of you who are serving in our Armed Forces, we want to make sure that our civilians are mobilizing and working on behalf of this country just as ably as you are. We salute you; we thank you. Thank you, everybody. God bless you, God bless the United States of America. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:23 a.m. in Thunderbird Hangar. In his remarks, he referred to Rep. Dina Titus of Nevada; Brig. Gen. Stanley T. Kresge, USAF, commander, U.S. Air Force Warfare Center, Nellis Air Force Base; and Col. Howard D. "Dave" Belote, commander, 99th Air Base Wing, Nellis Air Force Base.

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Names: Belote, Howard D. "Dave"; Berkley, Shelley; Heller, Dean; Kresge, Stanley T.; Marshall, Kate; Miller, Ross; Obama, Michelle; Reid, Harry; Titus, Dina; Wallin, Kim.

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Energy : Alternative energy markets, potential development and problems concerning; Energy : Alternative energy products and technologies, U.S. production; Energy : Foreign sources; Energy : Fuel efficiency standards, strengthening efforts; Energy : Hybrid automobiles, tax credits for purchase; Energy : Solar and wind energy; Environment : Carbon pollution; Environment : Climate change; Housing : First-time home purchase, tax credit; Iraq : U.S. military forces :: Deployment; Nevada : President's visits; Taxation : Tax relief.

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